



PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK

BRIEF

Keeping WisDOT Customers Satisfied: How Are We Doing?

The traveling public interacts with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in a variety of ways. Wisconsin residents drive on state-owned highways, purchase license plates from the Division of Motor Vehicles, and rely on state troopers to assist motorists and enforce traffic regulations. In deciding how to allocate resources within the organization, it is very valuable for WisDOT to know which services customers think are the most important, and how they rate existing services.

What's the Problem?

WisDOT obtains feedback from the public through customer letters, phone and written surveys, comment cards, and other methods. However, the agency has lacked a formal mechanism for measuring the public's overall satisfaction with its products and services. This places the burden on individual units of the organization to plan for customer needs and react to customer complaints. In addition, without a measure of how the department as a whole is doing, WisDOT has not had a valid tool for incorporating the voice of the customer in strategic decision making.

Research Objectives

The goal of this study was to measure and evaluate customer satisfaction and priorities through a comprehensive survey, and to help the department align its business decision making with these priorities. Phase I of this project developed and tested a telephone survey of the general public. Now, Phase II builds on those efforts by fine-tuning and implementing the customer survey, analyzing the data and producing a report of the results. Researchers' goals included:

- Reach as many different customer groups as is economically feasible.
- Provide comparable satisfaction measures across different divisions.
- Measure customer satisfaction with key service elements. Determine whether WisDOT is "doing things right."
- Determine customer priorities—whether WisDOT is "doing the right things."
- Identify which issues would cause customers to complain to their legislators.

Methodology

Six target customer groups were chosen, each representing a different type of interaction with WisDOT: Division of Motor Vehicles in Person; DMV by Phone, Mail or Online; Traffic and Road Construction; State Highway Operations; State Patrol; and Persons Impacted by Highway Construction. During January and February 2004, a total of 2,030 Wisconsin citizens were surveyed. The sample was a list of random Wisconsin households, proportional by county to state population.

Results

The survey results provided a wealth of information for WisDOT, setting a benchmark from which changes and improvements can be evaluated. The survey indicated that all areas of the organization are performing at a fairly high level, and customer satisfaction is strong. Researchers also identified some areas where WisDOT can improve. Key findings include:

- Respondents rated their overall satisfaction with four entities—the Department of Transportation as a whole, the DMV, the State Patrol and the state highway system—on a scale of 1 to 10. All scored well into the 7 range, with the State Patrol nearing 8.
- Property owners and community residents impacted by highway construction expressed the most dis-

Project Manager



"This research will allow WisDOT to statistically evaluate customer satisfaction across numerous department services."

—John Nordbo

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Investigators



"This survey lets WisDOT hear the voice of the customer, and will be very useful in planning for the future."

—William Mickelson

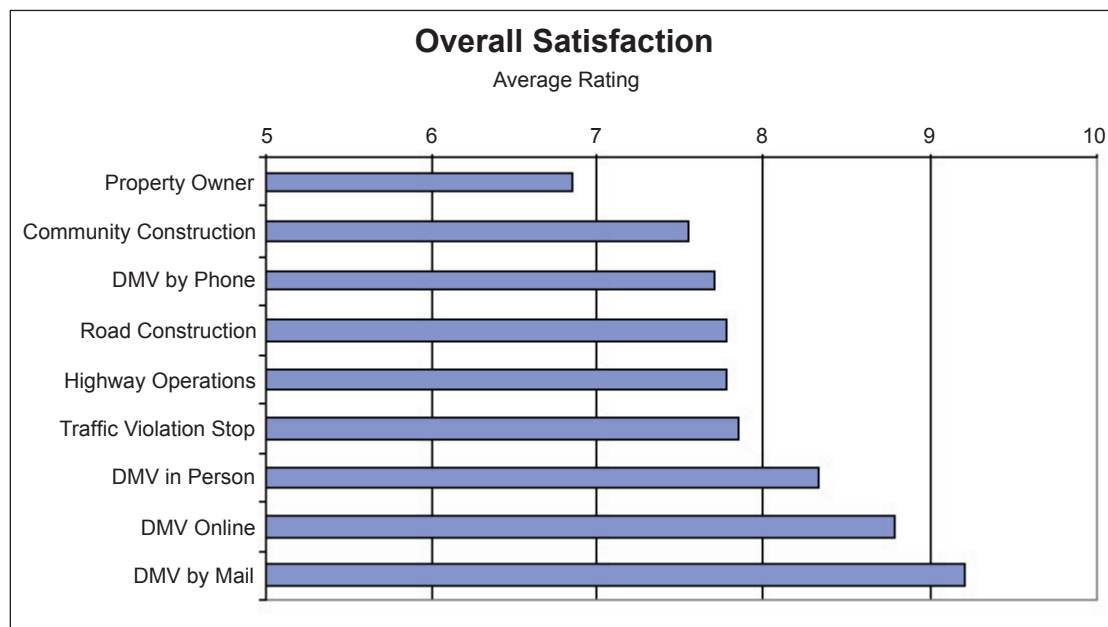
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"Our demographic analysis will help the department zero in on customer groups that are having problems."

—Teri Fulton

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Survey respondents were divided into sections according to the type of interaction they had with WisDOT. Division of Motor Vehicles customers gave the highest overall satisfaction ratings, while those rating their experiences with construction on their property gave the lowest ratings. Nearly all average ratings were above 7, which indicates a high level of satisfaction (page 15 of the final report).

satisfaction, and should be the key focus area for improvement (see chart).

- The DMV phone system is another key area for improvement. Customers indicated they could not always get the information they needed, and would like to spend less time on hold and have easier access to an operator.
- Customers gave very high ratings to their interactions with the DMV by mail, online and in person. Ease of navigation is the key area for improvement in the DMV online experience, while wait time to get to the counter drives customers' satisfaction with in-person interactions.

Benefits and Implementation

This research gives WisDOT key insights into customer satisfaction trends across demographic groups, and highlights the areas most in need of improvement. It provides department leaders with a consistent, reliable source of information to use in making decisions and recommendations to the Legislature. This study also provides a satisfaction benchmark to use as WisDOT grows and changes.

WisDOT can now use the information in the survey to decide how to improve the areas with the lowest levels of customer satisfaction.

Further Research

Researchers recommend repeating this survey every two years to reevaluate overall performance compared to the benchmarks set in 2004. Based on their experience with this study, researchers suggest slight changes to improve future survey content and methodology.

In addition, further research may be helpful in some areas in need of improvement, such as working with property owners affected by construction.

This brief summarizes Project 0092-04-01, "Development of a Mechanism to Measure Customer Satisfaction With Products and Services of the Department—Phase II," produced through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Research, Development & Technology Transfer Program, 4802 Sheboygan Ave., Madison, WI 53707.

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